



Three decades of democratic transition in Africa: What are the dividends for citizens?

Cotonou Regional Dialogue, 10–12 November 2017





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Introduction



This report summarizes the Regional Dialogue held in Cotonou, Benin, from 10 to 12 November 2017, on the theme: ‘Three decades of democratic transition in Africa: What are the dividends for citizens?’. The Dialogue was organized by the Africa and West Asia (AWA) Programme of the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (International IDEA), in partnership with the Beninese Association of Constitutional Law (ABDC) and the International Organisation of La Francophonie (OIF), with the support of the Royal Norwegian Embassy in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

The Dialogue, the first of its kind in Africa, brought together representatives of the African Union (AU), Regional Economic Communities (RECs), African networks of election management bodies (EMBs) and African constitutional courts, as well as scholars, experts and members of civil society organizations (CSOs), who focused their attention on the progress gains and limits of 30 years of democratic construction in Africa. Various issues were addressed during the Dialogue, including:

- The linkage between formal institutions of democracy (procedural democracy) and the values and practices which underpin and legitimize it (substantial democracy);
- The effectiveness and justifiability of socio-economic and cultural rights, and the performance of states in the provision of public services as democratic requirements;
- The organizational and infrastructural capacities of States in the development and implementation of public policies geared towards the continued improvement of the living conditions of their nationals;
- The management of diversity and equity at the service of an inclusive democracy;
- The capacity of fragile African states to deal with democratic dividends for their citizens; and
- The role of the private sector in creating democracies that deliver for African citizens.

Some decisive issues that cut across all of the sessions emerged. First, the necessary connection between institutional democracy and democratic dividends. Indeed, beyond the progress made in terms of establishing democratic institutions over the last three decades, Member States still have challenges in creating positive interactions between democracy and development, drastically reducing poverty and effectively fighting against inequality and inequity. The participants therefore took into account the volatile international environment as well as the opportunities and constraints of globalization of which Africa is a part.

Second, panellists dwelt on the fundamental need to educate citizens to enhance the culture of democracy, transform them into citizens with the ability to call for effective public action, hold elected representatives and leaders to account and oversee and sanction them. Education provides the driving force that can generate this sustainable ‘transformational power’ in Africa. Fatima Karadja, a member of the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM) Panel, expressed it well when she said: ‘citizens must be trained, educated, knowledgeable, alert and sensitized, because this is the only way to consolidate our democracies’.

Third, between the highest and lowest levels, local authority must regain its place and its dignity. The Dialogue underscored that strong democracies must be buttressed by efficient decentralization policies, which guarantee greater regional equity, the development of territories and cultures and, ultimately, a better integration into the nation state.

To address these challenges, African societies confronted with the task of democratic transition must invent a new collective project, new national and regional narratives, and develop a new political awareness capable of learning the lessons of the past 30 years.

Key recommendations

In conclusion, three sets of key recommendations were made:

1. For International IDEA’s AWA Programme and its partners

- Pursue dialogue/reflection and advocacy for the respect of the economic, social and cultural rights of citizens of African countries and their actions to strengthen democratic institutions (including EMBs, constitutional courts, parliaments and political parties).
- Develop programmes to strengthen the individual and societal dimension of democratic governance.
- Consider as themes for future Dialogues the relationship between the private sector and democratic dividends in African countries; women’s empowerment in the creation of democratic dividends; and decentralization as the main driver of the guarantee to respect the economic, social and cultural rights of citizens of African countries.

2. For the Regional Economic Communities

- Incorporate the need for Member States to respect and promote citizens’ economic, social and cultural rights into regional frameworks for promoting democratic governance.

3. For the AU Commission Department of Political Affairs and African Governance Architecture

- Consolidate advocacy and support in favour of respect for the economic, social and cultural rights of African citizens, including by disseminating, popularizing and supporting the implementation of existing legal instruments—in particular, the AU Convention on Preventing and Combating Corruption (2004); the African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance (2007); the African Charter on the Values and Principles of Public Service and Administration (2011); and the African Charter on the Values and Principles of Decentralization, Local Governance and Local Development (2014).

Opening session



The opening session was chaired by His Excellency Barrister Robert Dossou, former Minister, and former President of the Constitutional Court of Benin, with statements from Professor Frédéric Joël Aïvo, Dean of the Faculty of Law and Political Science, University of Abomey-Calavi, and President of the ABDC, Benin; Ambassador Dr Boubacar Issa Abdourahmane, OIF Representative to the AU and the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (ECA); Dr Khabele Matlosa, Director of Political Affairs, AU Commission; Professor Adebayo Olukoshi, AWA Regional Director, International IDEA; His Excellency Emmanuel Tiando, President of the Autonomous National Election Committee (CENA), Benin (represented by the Vice President, Geneviève Boko Nadjo); and His Excellency Professor Theodore Holo, President of the Constitutional Court, Benin.

In his goodwill message, His Excellency Ambassador Kwesi Quartey, Deputy Chairperson of the African Union Commission, commended International IDEA for convening the Dialogue, which coincided with the updating of the political agenda of the AU. This process stems from an awareness that the security approach alone cannot address the vulnerabilities with which African countries are confronted and that there is a need to meet the real and legitimate demands of the citizens of African countries to carry out the priority project of Agenda 2063 aimed at silencing the guns in Africa by 2020, and realizing the pan-African vision of an ‘integrated, prosperous and peaceful Africa, driven by its own citizens, and representing a dynamic force on the global scene’. His Excellency Ambassador Quartey encouraged the high-calibre participants to have free and proactive discussions in order to provide the AU with food for thought on this issue, in a context of multidimensional threats to the continent and the upsurge of unilateralism, which particularly affects the youth.

In their own welcome addresses, the various speakers recalled the highly symbolic importance of the Dialogue being held in the capital of Benin, the country that initiated the national sovereignty conferences that marked the end of oppressive regimes and single-party rule in Africa. Better still, Benin is a prominent example of a democratization process that has not only succeeded but also seen democracy consolidated. To illustrate this, the speakers listed the numerous peaceful regime changes, the robustness of some of the national institutions (in particular, its Constitutional Court and its Independent National Electoral Commission) and the resultant increase of political freedom that prevails in the country. They expressed the hope that the promises made during this institutional democratization processes will materialize for citizens and that other African countries will be inspired by it.

As stressed by the ABDC President, the political dialogue provided an opportunity to critically assess the democratization process on the continent, without compromise or self-flagellation. It was therefore possible to take a prospective, objective and critical view of the

achievements of the past 30 years. From this viewpoint, the diversity in the composition of participants from different backgrounds (academics and activists, as well as former decision-makers and current officials) made for lively, provocative discussions anchored in the unique historical context of Africa's democratic evolution. After recalling the cumulated setbacks of the postcolonial state up to the end of the 1980s, which led to strong internal mobilizations for democracy, Professor Aïvo pointed out that the issue today was to ask the African political elite what it has done in the past three decades to realize the aspirations of the populations to live in dignity and freedom—that is, to make the independence of the continent a reality.

In his opening remarks, Ambassador Boubacar Issa Abdourahmane deplored the insignificance of the dividends of democratization, which were barely felt at the social and economic level by citizens in the majority of African countries.

Dr Khabele Matlosa recalled that when taking stock of the democratic transition in Africa, both the dividends and the deficits must be identified. However, the challenges are still numerous and include the non-inclusion of women and young people (the level of women's participation in politics has stagnated at 6 per cent continent-wide), corruption and total breakdown in the supply of basic public services to the citizens of African countries, which compels their citizens to choose alternatives that present threats to the institutional democratization process and to development. Dr Matlosa further highlighted the pan-African vision of the AU's Agenda 2063: of an 'integrated, prosperous and peaceful Africa, driven by its own citizens, and representing a dynamic force on the global scene'. He pointed out that to achieve this objective—which focuses on the social, economic and cultural rights of the citizens of African countries—his own Department of Political Affairs and the African Governance Architecture (AGA) had undertaken a reflection exercise aimed at formalizing a work programme. Dr Matlosa noted that the rapid implementation of this work programme will contribute to the linkages between the AGA and the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA) of the AU within the framework of preventive structural diplomacy; for peace/security and respect for the socio-economic and cultural rights of citizens are two sides of the same coin, as stipulated in the Solemn Declaration on 50 years of the AU/OAU. There cannot be one without the other and each depends on the other. In conclusion, Dr Matlosa underscored the need to overcome certain dilemmas such as the contradictions between democratic supply and demand; formal democracy versus substantial democracy; and liberal democracy versus 'developmentalist' democracy.

From this standpoint, Professor Adebayo Olukoshi proposed a stimulating agenda of future actions to the participants, consisting of elevating efforts for democratization to a higher level. He noted that while numerous and substantial achievements have been made to date, there is a need to consolidate them by striving to resolve issues related to poverty, various inequalities, the perverse effects of aid, trafficking and insecurity. But beyond these material aspects, it is also crucial through our own representations to rebuild our pride and our dignity through shared values.

Barrister Robert Dossou and Professor Holo, in their respective statements, recalled the long and difficult road traversed over the past 30 years: regime changes, the constitutionalization of human rights, the creation of independent control bodies and institutions; in short, resolute progress towards genuine rule of law, which, though difficult, has not stopped. In the 1990s Africans became aware that it was finally possible for them to appoint and revoke their rulers. This revolution of political practices is still continuing. Barrister Robert Dossou insisted in his opening address on the economic dimension of democratization. The benefits of democratization, he said, include the strengthening of the individual's status, which changes from 'unworthy subject' to full citizen.

Panel 1. Reconciling procedural/ formal democracy and substantial/real democracy



The theme of this Panel required participants to reflect on and go beyond the artificial discrepancy between the form and substance of democracy. Indeed, unlike those citizens all over the continent whose burning aspirations prompted them to question the political order, the panellists were left wondering whether ‘we have not sold a truncated perception of democracy to Africans, with a focus on political and civil rights to the detriment of socio-economic and cultural rights’. If so, what successive readjustments, circumventions and eviscerations had they made that had resulted in democracy being no more than an empty box? What was the role of the political, intellectual and economic elites, and of course the media? How should democratic governance be reinvigorated so that it provides effective public services (including health, education, access to water, employment and decent housing in a healthy environment)? These are the questions addressed by the first Panel.

The Panel was moderated by Her Excellency the Honourable Thoko Didiza, President of the Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians (CWP), Africa Region, with Barrister Akere Muna, President of the International Anti-Corruption Conference (IACC) and Former Vice-Chair of Transparency International, as lead speaker. The Panel included the Honourable Aissata Daffé, MP, National Parliament of Guinea Conakry; Her Excellency Fatima Karadja, Member of the APRM Panel of Eminent Persons; Professor Frédéric Joël Aïvo, Dean of the Faculty of Law and Political Science, University of Abomey-Calavi and President of the ABDC, Benin; and Ambassador Dr Boubacar Issa Abdourahmane, OIF Representative to the AU and ECA.

The contributions largely focused on three aspects: successes in building institutions of democracy; the incomplete nature of democratic construction; and the need to strive to reach the higher stage of democracy.

Successes in building institutions of democracy

All the panellists emphasized that post-1990 Africa is completely different from that of the 1970s and 1980s: an impressive qualitative leap forward was made within a relatively short time (what does 30 years represent in the political history of a continent?). The principles of political pluralism, electoral competition and political change are all factors which show that everywhere today, accession to power is conditional upon predefined rules, said His Excellency the Honourable Thoko Didiza.

Military regimes, coups d'état and presidents for life seem to belong to the past (as has been seen in the Gambia and Zimbabwe). Afrobarometer surveys show that Africans have approved and taken ownership of democratic values and standards.

Professor Frédéric Joël Aïvo argued, from this standpoint, that there are legitimate democratic countries 'which adopted fourth-generation (4G) constitutions with all the rights and new institutions, sometimes before the major democracies'. In fact, the normal and regular functioning of the various state institutions is proof of their appropriation of the rules and principles of formal democracy. Thus, in almost all African countries, parliaments legislate by voting laws, in particular electoral laws, and attend to the renewal of governing bodies. Likewise, the constitutional courts in charge of ensuring constitutionality take part in institutional work, not forgetting the regulatory bodies, and elections are generally regular.

In formal terms, the panellists agreed on the fact that Africa had taken ownership of the operating rules and principles of democratic regimes. This view represents a sufficiently solid argument to preclude 'falling into afro-pessimism', argued Fatima Karadja, Member of the APRM Panel.

The incomplete nature of democratic construction

As African common sense puts it, 'you can't eat democracy'. Indeed, extremely high levels of poverty and marked inequalities are the primary indicators of the limits of African democracy. The numerous socio-economic pathologies of African democratic regimes have been identified: endemic corruption and lack of accountability, draining of state resources, monopolization of state resources and funds by the ruling elite, bureaucratic inefficiency, no notion of general interest and priority given to the individual interests of current rulers, sophisticated or flagrant manipulation of texts, misguided representation in the interest of the executive, judiciaries that are not genuinely independent, shortcomings of political parties' manifestos, insufficient allocations of funds to controlling bodies and local authorities, closing of civic and public spaces, among others. The leaders thus gradually erode the new social contracts, which were established by national conferences and the citizens' belief in social progress. From this standpoint, immigration and even terrorist strategies can be considered as exit options.

The need to strive to reach the higher stage of democracy

To overcome this 'tension between form and substance' and restore confidence in democracy, the lead speaker, Barrister Akere Muna, summarized as follows: 'Form is nothing, but there is nothing without substance. Form and substance are two sides of the same coin. Forgetting either would expose our young democracies to the greatest risks and tensions.' What is at issue is law and democracy, according to Ambassador Dr Boubacar Issa Abdourahmane, who argued that in this system, procedure and substance must be closely interlinked, because they are the conditions that must be met for the other to exist.

Practically, solutions aimed at reconciling formal democracy and substantial democracy were explored. For the Honourable Aissata Daffé, this reconciliation must involve having more inclusive and equitable democratic rules towards women and young people. Taking the example of Guinea, she deplored that despite the country's transition from the authoritarian regime of President Sékou Touré to the democratic government of President Alpha Condé, women still have not reached a quota of 30 per cent in terms of political participation and representation. She noted that the situation is worse for young people; and this lures them towards the ultimate sacrifice of clandestine migration towards an increasingly closed 'elsewhere'.



According to Professor Aïvo, we must strive for social democracy in which the loyalty of the legislator is focused on the concerns of the population and their satisfaction. On this precise point, Professor Aïvo argued that to reconcile formal democracy with substantial democracy, the need ‘to restore democracy to the citizens’ must be felt. He underscored the importance of ensuring that ‘the functioning of democracy helps to resolve the problems generated by society’. To this end, he urged African states to take all citizens seriously and to institutionalize a status for their opponents.

In conclusion, Barrister Akere Muna, Fatima Karadja and the participants in the discussion called for more democratic governance: it is important to heed the socio-economic and cultural concerns of citizens—in particular those of young people and women.

Panel 2. Socio-economic and cultural rights in the democratization process



The second Panel focused on the issue of socio-economic and cultural rights in the democratization process in Africa for the past three decades. The session sought to determine to what extent the implementation of socio-economic rights constituted a sort of blind spot or, at least, a loophole in the African democratic transitions; in which case the possibility of replacing it at the core of democratic consolidation in Africa should be considered.

It was unanimously observed that most of the crises in the democratization processes in Africa are due to the disregard of citizens' social, economic and cultural rights. Yet, these rights should take centre stage in the democratic debate in African countries where elementary needs like access to water, electricity, basic health care, food and education are not yet met. The panel discussion was intended to enrich the reflection through a closer linkage between democratic governance and real development for citizens.

The panel was moderated by His Excellency Dr Jose Brito, President of the West Africa Institute, and the lead speaker was His Excellency Dr Oby Ezekwesili, Former Nigerian Minister, Former World Bank Director, Initiator of the 'Bring Back our Girls' movement following the abduction of 200 young women by members of the Nigerian separatist group Boko Haram, and International IDEA's Ambassador of Democracy. The participants were Professor Claudine Tshimanga Mbuyi Kaseka, Coordinator of the Observatory of Economic Policies and Human Development, DRC; Professor Christine Desouches, University of Abomey-Calavi, Benin; Professor Jean Louis Esambo Kangashe, Judge at the Constitutional Court of the Democratic Republic of Congo; and Tamsir Sall, representative of Senegal.

The main issue for this Panel was: 'Is democracy an end in itself or a means of creating favourable conditions for citizens' happiness?' After outlining the origins of socio-economic and cultural rights, which emerged at the global level after World War II (right to education, right to health, right to adequate food, right of access to water, right to housing) and the political history of Cabo Verde, His Excellency Dr Jose Brito was of the view that democracy must enable rulers to have the means to satisfy the essential needs of the citizens. Any democracy that does not provide such basic services takes the risk of sacrificing its people—in particular, its youth—and thereby compromises its own survival. He put forward the idea of the necessity for dual leadership: the normal leadership of those who aspire to or who are already in power and the leadership of citizens whose aspirations must be fulfilled on the basis of a real contract of trust formalized by laws and constitutions.



The lead speaker, Her Excellency Dr Oby Ezekwesili, stressed that democracy is not an end but a means, not a result but a process of continuously and effectively meeting the needs of citizens. To this end, there is a need not only for responsible political elites but also for a dynamic and committed civil society. Indeed, any wait-and-see attitude in a society encourages rulers to develop monopolistic behaviours. The delivery of public services, good governance and accountability can only be effective if there is a strong demand for qualitative democracy by organized citizens. To achieve this, she recommended the creation and institutionalization of a Citizens' Office in each African country, whose mission would be to support, assess, guide and channel the action of decision-makers. With regard to the risk of duplication with parliaments, which are supposed to represent citizens, the participants' unanimously pointed to two principles: complementarity and subsidiarity. Her Excellency Dr Oby Ezekwesili concluded that through this Africa would make a fundamental contribution to democratization processes around the world on the basis of the consensual culture of its societies.

Professor Claudine Tshimanga Mbuyikaseka echoed the same views based on the painful case of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), where growth is constant (9.5 per cent) but not pro-poor (70 per cent poverty rate). Consequently, chronic failures in the delivery of essential services (sudden cuts in water and electricity supplies, concealment of costs in health structures under penalty of seizure of patients by the hospital administration) are such that they contribute to radicalizing urban youth and creating a noxious and volatile environment. Professor Claudine Tshimanga Mbuyikaseka then introduced the central issue of natural resources management and the need 'to freely dispose of one's wealth'. And yet, the DRC with its sub-soil that is undoubtedly among the richest in the world, is subjected to voracious predation, depriving its populations of their socio-economic rights. It is not a 'natural resource curse', she argued, but 'a problem of management'. There is no sharing of socio-economic dividends, which the populations legitimately expect, and this is the cause of most armed conflicts.

Tamsir Sall noted that one cannot talk about socio-economic and cultural dividends as long as states and their leaders—including the opposition—continue 'to forego large parts of their sovereignty in the social field'. Mr Sall stressed that, contrary to the generally accepted idea, the legitimacy of any political system does not rest on the pseudo solidity of its institutions, but on its capacity to anticipate/meet the demands of its citizens. He noted that, in his long international and national experience, he has never come across a political system that has survived ignoring citizens' demands, and he urged African leaders as well as continental and regional institutions and their partners to think seriously on this issue in order to shift their priorities. Mr Sall concluded by questioning the existence of dual leadership as mentioned by Minister Brito: are our leaders really at the service of the citizens? Are the mechanisms they adopt really for the benefit of citizens or is there another hidden monopolistic project maintained within and fed from outside? The fact that Africa has only a few visionary leaders is a clear indicator. Mr Sall invited participants to reflect on these two issues that are fundamental in the current context.

Professors Christine Desouches and Jean-Louis Esambo Kangashe recalled the paradox that all demands for democracy and the rule of law since the first wave of democratic transitions in Africa were based on the search for greater well-being and dignity for the populations while in reality these populations were overlooked. Although all the socio-economic and cultural rights and freedoms were recognized in all African constitutions, their observance is still a distant aspiration despite citizen demand and the support of development partners including the OIF. According to Professor Desouches, this marginalization should be of concern to development partners in the context of the adoption of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs); for Professor Esambo Kangashe it should lead to constitutionalization and ultimately true respect for economic, social and cultural rights.

They both saw as a prerequisite the determination of political choices for citizens on concrete, objective bases and the rationalization of electoral competition on our continent. Only then would each voter understand why he or she is voting for X or Y, over and above the purely pragmatic nature of the vote—which is currently limited to displaying solidarity (e.g. with an ethnic group, with those that are similarly short of food or other basic needs, to obtain work or to win some favour).

Consequently, added Professors Desouches and Esambo Kangashe, even though we should hope for dividends from our democratic processes, this gap must be narrowed and socio-economic and cultural rights be made a priority. This would help put an end to ‘top-down democracy (political democracy)’ in favour of ‘bottom-up democracy (social democracy)’. In this context, Professor Desouches indicated that African courts have started showing the way. Regarding the justiciability of economic and sociocultural rights, which is a good indicator of governance, she said that:

at the African level, the African Court on Human and Peoples’ Rights has started to have an interesting case law in this direction. At the level of States, the constitutional courts, in particular of French-speaking States, have also started preparing a national case law. There is a corpus, which largely recognizes economic and sociocultural rights. This case law, which if no longer nascent is still developing, must be reinforced by a democratic culture.

The discussions emphasized the need to strengthen the individual and societal dimension of governance. Professor Tshimanga Buyi Kaseka believed there was a need ‘for accountable leaders, with a developmentalist vision, and not “politicians of the belly”’. Professor Desouches similarly noted that the UN had recently adopted the SDGs, among which were economic and socio-cultural rights, and that states must be governed in a way that would ensure the achievement of those goals. Finally, the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM) was once again recognized as a powerful tool to be mobilized to achieve more effective social governance.

Panel 3. Access to and provision of public services



Through the theme ‘Access to public services and provision of public services in African countries for three decades’, the Dialogue sought to provide participants with the opportunity to reflect on the dynamics of the quality of African public service delivery in the process of the political and social transformation initiated since the 1990s. Participants described this topic as crucial because, in the eyes of citizens, it is a prerequisite for the legitimacy of political systems that have grown out of political transitions. From this viewpoint, the performance of public administrations was questioned.

Panel 3 was moderated by Cyrille Zogo Ondo, Programme Specialist at the OIF. Professor Anastase Shyaka, Director General of the Rwandan Governance Board, was the lead speaker and the participants were: Her Excellency Dr Cristina Fontes Lima, Former Vice Prime Minister, Cabo Verde; Professor Abdoulaye Soma, Special Advisor to the Prime Minister of Transition in Burkina Faso; Jean Pierre Elong Mbassi, Secretary-General of United Cities and Local Governments of Africa (UCGLA); and Dr Mamadou Dia, Former Head of Division, Democracy, Governance and Human Rights, Department of Political Affairs, African Union Commission.

Having shared the Rwandan experience, Professor Shyaka stressed that access to and provision of public services constitute a primary concern for Rwandan leadership, public authorities and citizens because of the country’s history. Rwandan leaders and citizens are convinced that strong public services are the basis of a transformative and developmental State. Professor Shyaka noted that, for them

no matter how organized and constitutional a government is, it would not get very far in the absence of a public administration system capable of translating its broad political intentions, enforcing its laws and delivering services needed by the people. Without a professionally competent public administration, the state cannot count on making those things happen which it wants to see happen or on pre-empting undesirable developments.

Government and state structures consequently set up various tools to build the capacities of public services, as well as indicators and techniques to improve and assess the performance of civil servants and the users’ level of satisfaction. According to Professor Shyaka, the results are very encouraging: under the World Bank’s Worldwide Governance Indicators, Rwanda registered a rate of 70 per cent in terms of ‘governance effectiveness’ against 39 per cent for the rest of the continent. More important for him is the fact that Rwandan citizens have

greater confidence in the national tools for the assessment of the efficiency and effectiveness of their country's public utility services, undoubtedly because they participated in their development within the framework of an inclusive and participatory process. Building on a 'sustainability requirement', Rwanda also made the fight against corruption its hobbyhorse and is about to achieve its objective thanks to 'endogenous solutions'. Professor Shyaka concluded by noting that in 2018 the Rwandan Governance Board will strive to influence the quality of services in all sectors, generate political reforms, encourage the effective application of innovations in social development and strengthen the partnership between government institutions and civil society.

Cristina Fontes Lima hailed the exceptional public utility services in Rwanda. She pointed out that, as in Rwanda, the quality of public services in Cabo Verde depends on the political will of the country's leaders but especially on strong demand from citizens and the history of the country. Recalling the country's history, she noted that it was a deliberate choice of leaders and citizens to focus on the quality of public service to solve the socio-economic difficulties and the development lags confronting Cabo Verde since its independence in 1975. Dr Fontes Lima recalled how the prioritization of public services had meant tough requirements in terms of the training and development of public officials, careful selectivity in their recruitment and strict evaluation of their performance. She noted that this process went hand in hand with the consolidation of the democratic institutions in the country and that it undoubtedly contributed to it by their participating in the structuring of electoral preferences and the institutionalization of the political programmes of the various political parties. Each of them had set up a programme and objectives for the provision of public services to citizens, on the basis of which the latter were able to choose. Dr Fontes Lima added, however, that the picture is not all bright in Cabo Verde. As in other countries on the continent, there are still shortcomings in public service delivery. She noted that the public authorities are developing innovative programmes to solve these issues in order to meet citizens' demands. She gave the example of the 'traditional doctors' usually referred to as medical assistants, who are mostly farmers, who effectively and efficiently participate in reducing the health problems within the grassroots communities. She also mentioned the introduction of telemedicine in Cabo Verde, which made it possible for all the islands of the archipelago to have access to specialized doctors. Dr Fontes Lima concluded that Cabo Verde, through its policy focused on the issue of social concerns relating to public service delivery, was able to join the group of medium-income countries.

According to Dr Mamadou Dia, the majority of African states had not yet recovered from the impact of structural adjustment policies in the provision of public services. He explained that since then, basic public services in the education and health sectors, the central State programmes, agriculture and infrastructure were in a catastrophic state. Higher education had been marginalized because the requirements of the IMF and World Bank were extensively focused on basic education. He observed that the African Charter on the Values and Principles of Public Service and Administration—which had been adopted by African heads of state in 2011 to break this cycle and promote development administrations, and had been ratified to date by 16 states—was still largely unknown to citizens and public officials. The application of the principles it contains was also very weak in spite of the efforts made by the Department of Political Affairs of the AU Commission, the UNDP and training centres such as the Kenyan School of Administration and the Ghana Institute of Management and Public Administration. Dr Dia concluded that the fact that issues relating to public services are pushed into the background is not without consequences in terms of the political stability of African countries and called for a paradigm shift on this.

Following the same line of thought, Professor Abdoulaye Soma pointed out that the violent insurgent movements in North Africa and Burkina Faso are linked to the lack of consideration of the needs of citizens. For example, the political and constitutional crisis in



Burkina Faso prompted the authorities of the transition to ponder to what extent the departure of President Blaise Compaoré was attributable to the poor quality and exorbitant cost of public services, in addition to other motivations such as the will of the people to defend article 37 of the Constitution. The transitional government thus developed an emergency socio-economic programme on education, health and food along with institutional reforms. The trend of post-colonial African states to inadequately address their populations' basic needs is contrary to the endogenous cultures; Professor Soma recalled that as far back as the 13th century the Charter of Kouroukan Fouga was already committed to providing certain services to the people, in particular food security and housing.

For Jean Pierre Elong Mbassi, this reactive and non-proactive 'governmentality' is almost always the root cause of the recurrent political and social crises in the African states. Taking a historical perspective, he remarked that the gap between the promise to build national unity and the African state's de facto withdrawal from the territories in terms of public services is not new and sustains a strategy of domination based on extraction. Mr Elong Mbassi observed that under colonization, priority was given to political capital to provide public services for the control of institutions and to ports for the export of natural resources. He deplored that this logic had persisted over the last 30 years of democratic transition; new elites still give preference to the centre over the periphery so as to satisfy their external mentors, to whom they owe their access to and maintenance of power. He underscored the dilemma in which the political elites of landlocked countries repeatedly find themselves because the latter do not have ports to export their abundant natural resources.

Mr Elong Mbassi further stated that the fundamental contradiction in which these elites, which insist on following an extractive model, find themselves, amid the rising demands for the respect of socio-economic rights, partly explains the crises and vulnerabilities with which these countries are confronted. He added that, as a result, 'the territory has disappeared and the concentration of elites in the capital and the ports leads to the forsaking of the rest of the periphery, increases its abandonment and generates violence there'. Rebellious movements have emerged within these territories and this revolt has taken extreme forms through fundamentalism in the countries of the Sahel zone and Lake Chad or through the attempt to withdraw from republicanism, as in the anglophone part of Cameroon, in the two Congos or in northern Uganda, Central Africa, Somalia and even in Casamance, Senegal. The repressive solutions adopted by leaders—assisted by former colonialists, including in the current context of breakdown in international solidarity and the crisis of multilateralism—do not solve the problem because they still contribute to the perpetuation of the extractive model. Mr Elong Mbassi also deplored the capacity of the citizens of our countries to accept and adapt to the non-existence of public services—and to the near disappearance of the State; which was theorized by the old colonial powers and other so-called development institutions under the pompous formula of 'resilience of African societies and institutions'.

For Mr Elong Mbassi the only means 'of breaking this diabolic extractive logic and guaranteeing the optimal access of African citizens to public services is to establish an effective and proactive decentralization in all African countries. Their very existence is at stake.' From this standpoint, he deplored the scant regard that leaders of African countries have for the recent African Charter on the Values and Principles of Decentralisation, Local Governance and Local Development adopted in 2014 by the African heads of states but so far ratified by only three countries (Burundi, Madagascar and Namibia) which, except for Namibia, are not models of institutional and social democracy. He also regretted that the AU and its partners have given little or no support to the dissemination and popularization of this Charter; linking this situation to the resistance of the 'old model'. In conclusion, he said that most African states are exposed to risks of fragmentation or the massive flight of their young people towards an increasingly closed Europe because their economic, social and cultural rights—foremost among which is the right to work—are not respected. He

underscored the need to implement effective decentralization and called on not only the current political elites or candidates, but also the various populations to do so. Finally, he insisted on the fact that the exclusive migratory policies adopted by Europe and the United States, with the complicity of African elites, will not resolve anything without effective decentralization in favour of the citizens.

Professor Frederic Joel Aïvo revisited the reforms of international financial institutions, which promote a minimal State if not advocate for its absence. In his view, ‘liberalism does not necessarily and systematically mean the discretion of the state, the disappearance of the state and a laissez-faire attitude’. He asked two questions: ‘If the state withdraws or disappears, who will be accountable for the absence of public services? On what basis is the bond between the citizen and the state formed?’ For him, the State must ensure a massive presence in conformity with the developmentalist perspective of south Asian countries, where, despite liberal and market economy practices, the state and its public services are present; the state regulates, acts and implements vigorous policies geared towards the satisfaction of the needs of society, particularly in terms of access to public services.

The discussions among participants led to several recommendations: (a) the need to share African success stories extensively—in particular those of Rwanda and Cabo Verde—regarding the provision of basic public services and their access by citizens; (b) the need for the RECs, the AU Department of Political Affairs and AGA to disseminate, popularize and support the implementation of related continental legal instruments; and (c) the need for International IDEA and its partners to accompany the Department of Political Affairs, the AGA, the RECs and African countries in these processes.

Panel 4. Inclusion, management of diversity and equity



The theme discussed by Panel 4 related to inclusion, management of diversity and equity in African countries. Participants were invited to examine how ethnic, economic, religious and sexual minorities, migrants, women, the elderly, people with disabilities and others are treated in our states, but also to assess equity in African countries after three decades of democratization.

The panel was moderated by Professor Daniele Darlan, President of the Constitutional Court of the Central Africa Republic (CAR). The lead speaker was Professor Abdoulaye Bathily, Former Special Representative of the UN Secretary General. The discussants were Her Excellency Euphrasie Kouassi Yao, former minister, Special Advisor to the President of the Republic of Côte d'Ivoire; Rumbidzai Kandawasvika-Nhundu, Senior Programme Officer, International IDEA; and Professor Ibrahim Jibrin, CDD Nigeria.

Professor Abdoulaye Bathily initiated the dialogue by recalling that pre-colonial states, particularly empires, managed inclusion, diversity and equity better than the states that emerged after independence. He focused on the issue of equity and highlighted a number of gaps in most African countries since the start of political transitions of the 1990s, including: (a) the gap in wealth between the urban elite and the rural populations; (b) the gap in state presence between capitals and rural areas; and (c) the gap in the capacity to effectively participate in political decisions between a tiny minority and the large majority of citizens. He explained that the last gap is linked to the need to have substantial financial means so as to have a voice in influencing policy in African countries; this leads to a criminalization of politics, often through the use of dirty money. Professor Bathily illustrated this by stating that there is a close link between the identified 'gaps' and the endemic corruption in African countries since the beginning of political transitions. He noted that while this endemic corruption will cost African states—according to UNECA statistics published in 2016—more than 25 per cent of their GDP annually and thus reduce their capacity to meet the demand for public utilities, it is, in particular, the cause of the deliberate exclusion of the majority of citizens from participating effectively in society and is thus a solid barrier to the management of diversity as well as the economic and social transformation of these countries.

Professor Bathily concluded that it is imperative to ensure social equity as a means of combating corruption. He added that this requires governance reforms, which empower poor and marginalized groups and authorize them to call their government to account. This could further motivate service providers to meet the needs of the poor. Responsible service provision, in turn, would improve government revenues by increasing the fiscal space of the state, because it would encourage citizens to pay taxes. It is also crucial to invest in the social

capital of the most vulnerable. Professor Bathily also stated that another basic pillar of the inclusion effort consists in guaranteeing the enjoyment of the rights to ownership and the protection of these rights. However, the recognition of the rights of ownership is a complex issue because these rights derive from several sources (state, customs and religious laws), and the history of access rights is generally contextual. The strategies of the legal and other reforms should take these complexities into account so as to make provisions in favour of marginalized groups, fight against corruption and improve access to essential services.

Professor Jibrin Ibrahim noted that the issues of inclusion and equity create, for the state, a serious problem of access by the poor and marginalized social classes. He expressed regret that this access to the state has increasingly deteriorated since the start of the democratic transitions and asked what the reason for this phenomenon might be. Professor Ibrahim further noted the discrepancy in the discourse of decision-makers who, before coming to power, prioritize proximity, inclusion, equity and the management of diversity, but once in office forget these principles and accept distance and inaccessibility; this is often encouraged by the so-called formal democratic institutions. In his opinion, the immediate result of this situation is the complete loss of legitimacy of institutions and leaders—and in certain cases of the democratic system, as illustrated by the work of AfroBarometer—worsened by the fact that all three are unable to meet the basic demands of citizens as regards socio-economic and cultural rights. Professor Ibrahim noted that this work shows that a number of Africans (although admittedly small) are nostalgic for the period of military regimes and post-independence single parties because they have the impression that public services operated better then and the state was more accessible and present. For him the important thing is not the percentage, but the fact that in 2017 Africans can have this negative perception of democracy. He observed that this should challenge our sense of intellectual responsibility insofar as we contributed to the formalization of democratic institutions in our countries 30 years ago. The second consequence, in Professor Ibrahim's view, is the increase in centrifugal tendencies in many African states (including Nigeria, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Côte d'Ivoire, DRC, Congo Brazzaville, Niger, Mali and Chad), which are infiltrated and then instrumentalized by fundamentalist religious groups, narco-banditry or separatism. The context is all the more conducive for such infiltration as many young people of these countries, albeit well educated, are unemployed, live in extreme poverty and see no positive prospects. In conclusion, Professor Jibrin underscored the need to take this issue seriously.

Rumbidzai Kandawasvika-Nhundu dwelt on the barriers to the inclusion and political participation of women and young people. She stressed that African parliaments include only 22 per cent and 13 per cent women and young people, respectively. In her view, this monopolistic position of men finds its roots in their search for incomes associated with positions of power. There is need for a genuine change in mindset so that the deliberative spaces will be more open and respectful of social and cultural diversity. Mrs Kandawasvika-Nhundu also noted the need to empower African women to enable African societies to reach their full potential in terms of respect for economic, social and cultural rights. Women in fact play a more active role in the economic sector—as farmers, employees and entrepreneurs—than anywhere else in the world. They are the major providers of well-being for their families and the centrepiece of the future of their children. Their views carry great weight with regard to the social governance of their communities and nations. Nevertheless, they are still confronted by a variety of obstacles that prevent them from fully playing their potential role in this field. These obstacles to the full participation of women are fundamentally unfair. But worse still, they impede the socio-economic transformation of Africa. For Mrs Kandawasvika-Nhundu, the adoption of concrete and tangible measures aimed at closing the gender-based gaps in African countries could have major and durable repercussions.

Continuing this theme, Her Excellency Euphrasie Kouassy Yao indicated the need to take into account 'the gender approach' in the sustainable development and socio-economic



transformation of our countries. She noted that gender has become ‘a key instrument to boost the dividends of the democratic development process of Africa’ and proposed presenting Côte d’Ivoire’s experience regarding women’s inclusion in socio-economic development programmes and the policymaking process. Mrs Kouassy Yao thus presented the unique and innovative tool set up in Côte d’Ivoire: the Compendium of Female Skills of Côte d’Ivoire (COCOFCI). Mrs Kouassy Yao recalled the main objectives of this programme as (a) to strengthen the gender dimension at all levels and in political, economic and social governance; (b) improve the political participation and representation of women; (c) provide useful and timely information to ensure the gender factor is taken into account during recruitment and/or appointment to public policy positions; and (d) strengthen women’s contribution to the socio-economic transformation of the country.

Mrs Kouassy Yao noted that, six years after its launch, the COCOFCI underwent an independent evaluation that highlighted several positive elements. The first was the relevance of this innovative mechanism—which is in line with the Maputo Protocol of 2003; the African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance; SDGs 5 and 16, but also with aspiration 6 of the AUs 2063 Agenda for the socio-economic transformation of Africa. The second was the effectiveness of the mechanism, attested to by the growing number of adherents (to date 12,000 women from all socio-professional categories, of urban and rural origin), the publication of the first directory of Ivorian women in top positions, along with an increasing number of women candidates for parliamentary elections (from 105 in 2011 to 328 in 2016), the appointment of many women members of the COCOFCI in public institutions (30 per cent of members of the Economic and Social Council, 21 per cent of cabinet ministers, among others), the formulation of draft bills to further mainstream gender in the implementation and interpretation of the Constitution of November 2016, and the increased professional integration of women. The third positive element highlighted was the efficiency of the mechanism, confirmed by the institutional and financial audit conducted in 2016. Mrs Kouassy Yao concluded by stating that there is need for these results to be consolidated and pointed out that the fight for the equitable participation of women in African countries would not be over soon.

During the plenary discussions, several examples of recent socio-political crises linked to lack of inclusion, equity and poor management of diversity in African countries were given and a recommendation was made for International IDEA, its partners, the RECs and the Department of Political Affairs to amplify their action for the implementation of these principles in African countries.

Panel 5. State capacities, public policies and democratic dividends



Panel 5 focused on the theme ‘State capacities, public policies and democratic dividends in African countries for three decades’. It was moderated by Dr Remi Ajibewa, Director of Political Affairs of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), and the lead speaker was Professor Olu Ajakaye, Executive Director of the African Centre for Shared Development Capacity Building (ACSDCB). The participants were Her Excellency Hadiza Alfari, former Minister and Special Advisor to the Prime Minister of Niger; His Excellency Anicet Georges Dologuélé, former Prime Minister, MP, Central African Republic; and Dr Coffi Remy Noumon, Special Advisor to the Executive Secretary of ACBF.

Professor Olu Ajakaye proposed a political approach to the concept of democratic dividends, as the capacity or ability to guide or influence the behaviour of others or the course of political choices. In his view, in politics, as in economics, it is better to have more than nothing. In other words, rulers choose how they want to use the resources at their disposal and they will prefer a given policy to another depending on whether it is electorally profitable or not. Professor Ajakaye also stated that the paradox lies in the fact that while citizens are increasingly expressing their socio-economic and cultural needs, the rulers rarely opt for policies that satisfy them electorally and claim the right to stay in power. He insisted that public policies should be perceived not only as a governmental action programme, but also as the expression of a social contract between rulers and citizens. Professor Ajakaye concluded that a majority of rulers exercise power for reasons other than the national interest. He underscored the need for this to change and for African countries to have visionary and transformational leaders. He further observed that citizens should have their capacities strengthened in the area of public policy co-production, so as to better voice their demands for economic, social and cultural rights.

Her Excellency Hadiza Alfari shared Niger’s experience. She underscored that for 30 years public policies had not been institutionalized in Niger—particularly in the socio-economic and cultural fields—as they depended on the decision-makers who had developed them and ceased to exist as soon as they left. This non-institutionalization of policies makes it difficult to have a sustainable solution—if there is one—to citizens’ demand. Mrs Alfari revealed that in Niger, as in some other countries on the continent, it was sometimes even used by policymakers as a tool to control and influence the political choices of citizens. Regional public policy priorities (including hospitals, schools, roads, police stations and provision of other public services) were linked to the ‘electoral contribution’ of citizens of these regions. Those regions ‘with insufficient voter turnout or which voted the wrong way were penalized by the new authorities, who ignored their demands for socio-economic and cultural rights’.



She posited that the state's capacities with regard to public social policies are increasingly stretched because of security issues, which take precedence over development issues. She noted the resolve of Niger's current leadership to give priority to policies of social justice through decentralization. Mrs Alfari concluded on the need to train citizens to ensure the sustained observance and implementation of their socio-economic and cultural rights, irrespective of regime changes.

His Excellency Anicet Georges Dologuélé, former Prime Minister of the Central African Republic and candidate in the last presidential elections, pointed out that the low capacities of African states with regard to socio-economic and social justice policies can be explained by the irrational choices that voters make during elections. On the basis of his own experience, he noted that despite the so-called democratic transition over the past 30 years—including in more advanced countries—African voters are still very irrational and base their choice of candidate on mechanical solidarity (ethnic groups, religion, immediate food interest, etc.) rather than on the programme proposed with regard to socio-economic and cultural rights. By electing incompetent people to head the country citizens themselves participate in diminishing the state's capacities as regards public policies. Mr Dologuélé therefore asked whether 'we did not miss something at the turn of the 1990s by forgetting to teach citizens to determine their electoral preferences on the basis of objective criteria'. In his view, this naturally encouraged political crises and violence—as in the Central African Republic—whose determinants are partly ethnic or religious and impact on the effectiveness of the institutions as well as on presence of the state in the regions. Extending his analysis, he noted that this situation was exploited by national and international criminal interests to undermine the foundations of the state and fuel civil wars, the principal victims of which are the very people who had refused to make a rational choice that would have been beneficial to them. He concluded by insisting on the need for citizenship education to consolidate the democratic transitions launched three decades ago.

Taking note of the previous speakers' contributions, Dr Coffi Noumon laid emphasis on the need to strengthen the capacities of citizens, institutions, public officials, parliamentarians, and members of political parties in order for more proactive and transformative public policies on socio-economic and cultural rights to be implemented. He recalled that, as a specialized AU agency in these issues, the ACBF had implemented various continental, regional and national programmes to develop and implement optimal public policies that would help achieve the SDGs and Agenda 2063. Dr Noumon insisted on the importance of citizen empowerment, as confirmed by the socio-economic transformation of Southwest Asian countries.

During the plenary session, discussions among participants revolved around the responsibility of rulers or citizens and the inadequate policies of African states and of their public policies over the past 30 years. It became apparent that there was a need for citizen education as well as the strengthening of institutions; a need to consolidate the programmatic capacities of political parties and parliamentarians, the main channels through which citizens can make themselves heard; and, finally, a need to work on achieving a consensus between national political actors on the basic demands of citizens with regard to socio-economic and cultural rights.

Panel 6. Democratic dividends in fragile and vulnerable environments



Panel 6 focused on democratic dividends in fragile and vulnerable environments. This session was moderated by Dr Khabele Matlosa, Director of Political Affairs of the AU Commission. The lead speaker was Professor Agosthino Zacarias, Director of Studies at Accord. The participants were Ambassador Alfred Dube, Director of the Addis Ababa Office of the Institute for Security Studies; Kalliopi Ango Ela, Director of the Foundation for Geopolitics in Central Africa; and Dr Moumouni Soumano, Executive Director, Malian Centre for Inter-Party Dialogue and Democracy. The discussions held in this panel were based on the assumption that, even in situations of fragility and vulnerability, citizens can legitimately expect democratic dividends.

Professor Zacarias began his presentation with an analysis of the notions of fragility and vulnerability. He revealed that many Africans consider these notions to be of little relevance because they convey stigmas of incapacity and lack of progress. They imply that the country concerned is ranked in the ‘high risk’ category. He also noted that despite the lack of consensus around the definition of these concepts, it turned out that the work of Robert Jackson was adopted as a reference, thanks to its minimalist but functional definition of fragility as ‘negative [i.e. weak] sovereignty’ or a lack of capacity to provide essential services such as the security of persons throughout the territory, the latter’s integrity, health services and the fight against pandemics, food, education and so on. Professor Zacarias noted that an additional element had now joined the list of indicators of fragility and vulnerability—climate change, which has a harsh impact on the capacities of these countries. Fragile states experience or have experienced protracted crises, are highly dependent on international assistance and have low institutional, organizational and infrastructural capacities. They are referred to as ‘states under stress’, ‘fragile states’, ‘rogue states’ and so on. These are ‘quasi-states’, which survive only thanks to the support and goodwill of the international community and not thanks to their own governments’ capacities and efforts. Professor Zacarias went on to question whether there was the possibility of democratic dividends in such cases. He underscored the difficulty of answering that question because the priority for these citizens might be survival rather than democracy. He concluded that this shift in priorities could be fraught with risks for the sustainability of African democracies and stressed the urgent need to develop recovery policies for many African states falling into this category. Only then could they perform the essential function of guaranteeing minimal security, food, health and education for their populations.



Ambassador Alfred Dube supported Professor Zacarias' view but underscored the need to consider the specific situations of fragility and vulnerability in Africa. He noted that according to the Peace Fund Fragility Index 2016–17 the CAR, Chad, Mali, Niger, Burkina Faso, South Sudan and Somalia are all considered fragile and vulnerable. Yet their institutional contexts are very different. Some, like Niger and Burkina Faso, are democratic countries and have even experienced regime changes. In these cases citizens are entitled to demand democratic dividends. Their governments should, with the help of partners, meet citizens' basic needs with regard to socioeconomic rights. Others are authoritarian regimes in conflict situations, and here the dividend sought for citizens is democracy itself. Ambassador Dube pointed out that because of the dynamic nature of conflicts and crises on the continent, providing support to fragile states should help tackle the root causes of fragility. He concluded by stating that 'the objective should be to deliver results to the populations in a timely manner so as to manage their expectations and avoid relapsing into conflict.'

Kalliopi Ango Ela examined democratic dividends over the past 30 years for citizens of countries in central Africa ranked vulnerable or fragile in the 2017 Fragility Index. She noted the stagnation of the situation in Cameroon and Gabon—countries that took initial steps towards respecting socio-economic rights of citizens and embarked on political transition in the 1990s—and the fact that these rights had not even been taken into account in any of the other states. Mrs Ango Ela linked this phenomenon to the trajectories of institutional democracy in these countries, which has been either blocked or declining since the start of the transitions of the 1990s. She deplored the weaknesses of the REC of Central African States (ECCAS) and the obsolescence of the economic and security mechanisms that it had established to deal with the fragilities of its members. She noted that at its creation, ECCAS was mandated to 'promote and strengthen harmonious cooperation and a balanced and autonomous development in the economic and social areas of activity, with a view to achieving collective autonomy, raise the populations' standard of living, improve and maintain economic stability, strengthen the close and peaceful relations among its members and contribute to the advancement of the African continent'. It was not until later, in 1998, that ECCAS broadened its traditional objectives to the promotion of peace, security and stability, and made the development of subregional capacities a priority. Mrs Ango Ela mentioned that on both counts, ECCAS is outdated and has become a 'regional space of shared fragilities and vulnerabilities'. In conclusion, she insisted on the urgent need to reverse this trend, failing which several countries of the region will implode.

Dr Moumouni Soumano related the process that had taken Mali from being a country referred to as exemplary in democratic terms to a fragile state facing the threat of implosion. He noted that the congenital defect of Mali's democratization was its inability to develop into a social democracy, despite numerous programmes in support of decentralization largely funded by development partners. He said that this was linked to the 'unanimous' political system instituted by President Toumani Toure, in which any claims by the citizens to exercise their economic and social rights were rendered inaudible. As a result, the state has disappeared from the entire Northern and Central regions. Thus, youth in these regions have no alternative but to enlist in criminal networks (drugs, arms trafficking, violent extremism). According to Dr Soumano, the state should invent new forms of resilience. He denounced the projects proposed by development partners (France and Germany, among others) who 'put the cart before the horse' in an attempt to develop governance programmes in these territories, where the state is absent. To conclude, Dr Soumano said it was imperative to restore the state and its presence throughout Mali's territory before talking about democratic dividends for the citizens.

The discussions focused on the multidimensional nature of fragilities and vulnerabilities in African countries over the past 30 years, and the need to have states that are capable of dealing with it.

Panel 7. The role of the private sector in the creation of a democracy for the benefit of citizens



Panel 7 focused on the role of the private sector in the creation of a democracy for the benefit of African citizens for the past three decades. It was moderated by Dr Coffi Noumon, Special Advisor to the Executive Secretary of ACBF, and the lead speaker was Mohamed H'Midouche, President of the Interagency Coordination Group (IACG), Executive Vice President of the African Diplomatic Academy and former IACG administrator. The participants were Dr François Ekoko, United Nations Representative for South–South Cooperation; Brian Dzansi from IMANI Ghana; Professor Alban Alphone Ahoure, lecturer in Economics at Félix Houphouët-Boigny University, Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire; and Dionisio Pereira, President of the Network of NGO Platforms of West and Central Africa (REPAOC).

Mohammed H'Midouche started his presentation by promoting the principle that the private sector should contribute to creating dividends for citizens in a context marked by the scarcity of state resources. Recalling his long career at the African Development Bank (ADB), he gave examples of some of the many tools instituted by this organization to achieve this objective, including the creation of a pilot unit to support the private sector; organization of the first 'Round Tables of Businessmen', aimed at devising and defining a strategy for the development of the private sector; establishment of the African Finance Corporations; and investment of almost USD 3 billion per annum by the ADB's Private Sector Department. The problem, according to Mr H'Midouche, is that citizens of African countries are not familiar with these tools, which do not have a direct impact on their socio-economic and cultural rights. To fill this gap, the new ADB President, Akinwuni Adesina, launched the 'High 5' programme highlighting five development priorities: 'power Africa, feed Africa, industrialize Africa, integrate Africa, and improve the quality of life of the people of Africa'.

Mr H'Midouche went on to stress the need for the national private sector to also create dividends for citizens. He referred to the example of Morocco, where private sector contributions (in terms of sustainable job creation, construction of social, school and medical infrastructure, aid to the most disadvantaged populations, etc.) is a priority of the King and an element of his leadership. He also mentioned and commended the contribution of the Cabo Verde Diaspora to the development of the private sector, in particular in the real estate and services sectors, through financial transfers that account for 40 per cent of gross domestic



product (GDP). Mr H'Midouche concluded by expressing regret that the non-participation of the African private sector in the realization of some major projects at national level, for the benefit of foreign companies, was a sign that they show little regard for the socio-economic rights of citizens and that they are more concerned with profit making.

Dr François Ekoko questioned the contribution of Chinese companies to the creation of dividends for citizens of African countries in which they operate. He pointed out that there are 10,000 Chinese companies present in Africa, 80 per cent of which are private and only 20 per cent are public or parastatal. While the public companies tend to exclusively engage or hire Chinese workers, private companies employ local labour. As a result, 300,000 jobs were created in 2010. Dr Ekoko presented a typology of countries' engagement with China consisting of four categories: (a) countries with strong institutions and a China policy and strategy—countries that take full advantage of Chinese investments in Africa; (b) countries with important commercial and political ties but with no China strategy; (c) countries with commercial ties, no China strategy and weak institutions; and (d) countries with only personal interests, weak institutions, no strategy and no policy. Dr Ekoko made the assumption that when they operate in environments in which institutions and regulations are solid, Chinese companies respect the socio-economic rights of their local employees. Conversely, in environments with weak institutions and regulations, these companies are widely engaged in corruption, violation of local labour laws and regulations, the destruction of the environment, unfair competition with the local population and the pillage of natural resources. In conclusion, Dr Ekoko warned against having a systematically negative perception of Chinese companies in Africa, adding that their contribution to the creation of dividends for citizens depends on the solidity of existing institutions and regulations.

In his contribution, Brian Dzansi stressed that according to IMANI Africa, democracy is said to be effective when it meets the expectations and demands of citizens both through the state and through the private sector. He informed participants that IMANI Africa supports this process through the comparative studies and analyses it develops for public authorities and private companies. He further revealed that IMANI Africa strives to promote and disseminate the idea of corporate citizenship: it is currently doing so in Ghana and intends to do extend this activity throughout West Africa and the rest of the continent. According to the model it has developed, the company co-produces public goods for citizens, in particular at the local and rural levels. Mr Dzansi concluded that this co-production requires the strengthening of the capacities of both citizens and companies.

Professor Alban Alphone Ahoure reiterated that African citizens have numerous expectations with regard to democracy, which cover sectors as varied as education, health, employment, infrastructure, transport, the quality of public policies, equal opportunities, the respect for human rights, equity and the quality of elections. He questioned to what extent private companies have any interest in contributing to meeting these expectations, since their main objective is not to help consolidate democracy but to generate and maximize profit. Professor Alphone Ahoure noted that in this respect things have changed positively in recent years: private companies boast standards of corporate social responsibility and an inclusive company policy while investing in the well-being of the people and in sectors such as education, the empowerment of women, youth training and inclusive entrepreneurship strategies.

Professor Alphone Ahoure pursued his analysis by saying that even though the private sector mitigates certain shortcomings and helps satisfy the socio-economic demands of citizens, it also can, in the context of fragile democracies, contribute to aggravating inequalities. He deplored that in most African countries, an array of strategic sectors are under the control of foreign companies, much to the detriment of the interests and socio-economic rights of the citizens: access to water, supply of electricity, provision of medicines, urban transportation, rail transportation, ports, etc. He also condemned the 'toxic debt'

which several African countries have unfortunately incurred from international oil trading companies and refunded ‘on the backs of the majority of poor public servants’. Professor Alphone Ahoure finally denounced the monopolization of land by several major multinationals, with the complicity of the local political elites, to the detriment of farmers, who were condemned to sink deeper into poverty. He concluded that to guarantee dividends for citizens, strategic sectors must be removed from the control of foreign companies.

Dionisio Pereira also insisted on the fact that there is still a significant danger of the weakening of democracy by private companies because of the fragile institutions on the continent. He noted that many powerful national and foreign private companies exercise undue influence in order to pressurize the state to adopt policies, laws and regulations to their advantage. Sometimes, during election campaigns, these private entities make financial contributions that can appear legal but unduly undermine the foundations of democracy. In addition, the tendency to favour specific companies in government procurement and contract awards is a serious problem in Africa. In the same vein, many corrupt practices on the continent are committed and sustained by non-African actors. Mr Pereira also noted that the companies can seek to benefit from their monopoly situation by financing political parties, and can sometimes go as far as destabilizing the regimes in place when their revenues are threatened. There are many examples on the continent of foreign firms contesting the authority of states. He concluded on the imperative need to create the appropriate regulatory frameworks to prevent such situations.

The presentations were followed by lively discussions from which three conclusions emerged: (a) the need for corporate citizenship in order to provide dividends to the populations; (b) the need for International IDEA and its partners to initiate a substantial reflection on the take-over of the state by international companies—including Chinese companies—in African countries and the impact of this phenomenon on the socio-economic rights of citizens; and (c) the need to organize a thematic conference on this topic in 2018, in connection with the topic of the AU theme of the year, which relates to the fight against corruption as a step towards the socio-economic transformation of Africa.

Side event. Discussion with AU organs on the AU–International IDEA partnership



Alongside the Dialogue, a Discussion was held with AU organs on the 10-year-long partnership between the AU and International IDEA and the search for democratic dividends for African citizens. The Discussion was facilitated by Professor Adebayo Olukoshi, International IDEA's AWA Regional Director. The main speakers were Dr Khabele Matlosa, Director of Political Affairs of the AU Commission; the Honourable Sekou Fantamadi Traore, representative of the President of the Pan African Parliament; Khady Fall Tall, Vice President of the AU Economic, Social, and Cultural Council (ECOSOCC) and Dr Kofi Adorgloh, Regional Coordinator of the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM).

Dr Khabele Matlosa informed the meeting that the partnership between the AU and International IDEA was enshrined in a Memorandum of Understanding signed 10 years ago between the two partners. It primarily seeks to promote and implement the African Charter for Democracy, Elections and Governance (ACDEG). He pointed out that Chapter 9 of the ACDEG relates specifically to the socio-economic and cultural rights of citizens, and welcomed the fact that International IDEA and the DPA/AUC work closely to promote them within the context of the first 10-year action plan of Agenda 2063.

The Honourable Sekou Fantamadi also referred to the Memorandum of Understanding signed between PAP and International IDEA in March 2017. He noted that the two organizations have been working since that date to strengthen and implement the socio-economic and cultural rights of citizens, which are protected under article 3 of the Protocol to the Constitutive Act of the AU relating to the PAP adopted on 27 June 2014 in Malabo, Equatorial Guinea. He gave as an example the work done by International IDEA regarding the building of capacities of PAP members and staff through the New Developmental Approach to the Governance of Natural Resources and the functional integration of the continent. Sekou Fantamadi concluded by calling for the development of this partnership by strengthening the capacity of PAP members to draft model laws relating to the socio-economic and cultural rights of African citizens.

Khady Fall Tall deplored the absence of a Memorandum of Understanding between ECOSOCC and International IDEA, even though the two organizations have been interacting regularly since 2015. She gave the example of the visit of International IDEA's Secretary-General, Yves Leterme, to the President of ECOSOCC during the AU Summit of January 2016. Mrs Fall Tall concluded by reaffirming ECOSOCC's willingness to serve as a permanent platform for International IDEA to reach all citizens on the continent.

Dr Kofi Adorgloh emphasized the longstanding partnership between the APRM and International IDEA, despite the fact that a formal agreement between the two structures has yet to be concluded. He underscored the similarity of their approaches, which concurrently prioritize institutional democracy and social democracy. He concluded by underscoring the need for an acceleration of this partnership along with the implementation of the first 10-year action plan of Agenda 2063 and the new APRM mandate relating to the monitoring and evaluation of the implementation of the SDGs in African countries.

In his capacity as official representative of an International IDEA Member State and strategic partner, Audun Skei Fostvedt-Millet, head of AU and Regional Affairs at the Royal Norwegian Embassy in Addis Ababa, welcomed the solid and proactive collaboration between International IDEA and the AU—particularly in their relationship with the Department of Political Affairs—in the implementation of all the principles of the ACDEG, including respect for the socio-economic and cultural rights of citizens. He hailed the holding of the Regional Dialogue and the quality of the discussions, and confirmed the willingness of the Royal Norwegian Embassy in Addis Ababa to support the implementation of recommendations related to the respect of the socio-economic and cultural rights of African citizens.

In her capacity as official representative of an African Member State and strategic partner of International IDEA, Thoko Didiza, President of the Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians Africa Region and President of the Chamber responsible for Internal Arrangements at the South African Parliament, congratulated the two organizations for their close collaboration for the benefit of the citizens of African countries. She hoped that this partnership would be pursued and strengthened within the two components of democracy (institutional and social), this being essential to its sustainability in the increasingly volatile national and regional environments.

Side event. Launch of The Global State of Democracy



The second side event consisted of the launch of a new International IDEA publication, *The Global State of Democracy: Exploring Democracy's Resilience*. The launch was based on the concept of an 'IDEAthon', in which participants from different backgrounds engage in problem-solving labs and harness their collective knowledge to brainstorm innovative solutions to existing challenges. The lab participants, preferably representing a diverse mix of stakeholders (including policymakers, civil society representatives, academics and experts) contribute their expertise in order to identify project opportunities and initiate new collaborations. These ideas are then presented, discussed and voted on by the participants before being finalized and shared—at the event, online, in an article or through other means.

Laboratory 1: 'The changing nature of representation and political parties'

The first laboratory was moderated by Célestine Zanou, former candidate to the presidential elections of Benin. The participants were Raheemat Momodu, Head of the ECOWAS Liaison Office at the AU; Counsellor Guy Herve Kam, Spokesman for 'Balai Citoyen' in Burkina Faso; and Dr Mathias Hounkpé, Governance Programme Officer at the Open Society Initiative for West Africa (OSIWA). After the presentations and discussions with participants, the following conclusions were reached:

- There has been a change in the nature of political participation and representation in African countries over the past 10 years.
- This change is linked to the weakening and the legitimacy crisis of traditional political parties (the former national liberation movements and old single parties, as well as the new parties stemming from the transitions of the 1990s), which have been supplanted by citizen movements (e.g. Balai Citoyen in Burkina Faso, Lucha and Filimbi in DRC, Y en a Marre in Senegal and Croisade in Niger).
- These movements, which are more autonomous than the traditional political parties and closer to the socio-economic and cultural demands of citizens, have started falling within the scope of the political competition and having elected representatives in several countries (including Burkina Faso, Senegal, Mali, Cameroon, Gabon, Chad and Tunisia).

- The sustainability and legitimacy of these new forms of political participation and representation depend closely on their linkages with the socio-economic claims of the citizens.

Laboratory 2: ‘Can democracy prevent inequalities?’

The second laboratory questioned the role of democracy in the reduction of inequalities and was moderated by Professor Victor Topanou, former Minister of Benin. The participants were Cyrille Zogo Ondo, OIF Programme Specialist, and Shamsudeen Yusuf, Programme Officer at the Centre for Democracy and Development of Nigeria. The presentations and discussions produced four key answers:

- The African continent, particularly its sub-Saharan part, is considered as the most ‘unequal’ geographical area in the world.
- This phenomenon also affects countries of sub-Saharan Africa considered as the best performers in terms of democracy as attested by their Gini coefficients (35.9 for Mauritius; 47.2 for Cabo Verde; 60.5 for Botswana; 63.4 for South Africa, according to World Bank data updated in October 2017).
- Without social and corrective policies in African countries, including in the most high-achieving ones, inequalities will worsen and in the long term could threaten the dynamics of democratization in Africa.
- Democracy therefore cannot mechanically combat inequalities in Africa, especially if it is not social and fair.

Closing session

The closing ceremony of the Regional Dialogue provided a fresh opportunity to recall the indivisibility of institutional democracy and social democracy. In their closing remarks, Professor Aïvo, Dr Aderemi Ajibewa, Dr Khabele Matlosa and Professor Adebayo Olukoshi revisited this point and urged their institutions to work closely towards the dynamics of the two dimensions. In his closing statement, Professor Theodore Holo, President of the Constitutional Court of Benin, explained this indivisibility by the fact that the demand for institutional democracy in Africa emerged from the claim for economic and social rights by citizens. He concluded that in any event, social democracy cannot exist without strong institutions.



Participants in the Cotonou Regional Dialogue

Programme



Participants in the Cotonou Regional Dialogue



Friday 10 November 2017

9:00–10:15	Opening Ceremony	<p>Chair H.E. Barrister Robert Dossou, Former Minister, Former President of the Constitutional Court of Benin</p> <p>Welcome Remarks Prof. Frederic Joel Aivo, Dean of the Faculty of Law and Political Science, University of Abomey Calavi, President of the ABDC, Benin</p> <p>Ambassador Dr. Boubacar Issa Abdourahmane, OIF Representative to AU and UNECA</p> <p>Dr. Aderemi Ajibewa, Director of Political Affairs, ECOWAS Commission</p> <p>Dr. Khabele Matlosa, Director of Political Affairs, African Union Commission</p> <p>Prof. Adebayo Olukoshi, AWA Regional Director, International IDEA</p> <p>H.E. Emmanuel Tiando, President of the CENA, Benin</p> <p>H.E. Prof. Theodore Holo, President of the Constitutional Court, Benin</p> <p>Introductory Remarks H.E. Ambassador Kwesi Quartey, Deputy-Chairperson of the African Union Commission</p> <p>Official Opening Statement H.E. Barrister Robert Dossou, Former Minister, Former President of the Constitutional Court of Benin</p>
10:15-10:30	Group photo, coffee/tea break	
10:30–12:00	Panel Session 1	<p>How to Reconciliate Procedural/Formal and Substantive/Real Democracy?</p> <p>Moderator: Hon. Ms. Thoko Didiza, Chairperson of Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians, Africa Region</p> <p>Keynote Speaker Barrister Akere Muna, Chairperson of the ICCAC</p> <p>Discussants Hon. Aissata Daffé, MP, National Assembly of Guinea H.E. Mrs Fatima Karadja, Member of the APRM Panel Prof. Frederic Joel Aivo, Dean of the Faculty of Law and Political Science, University of Abomey Calavi, President of the ABDC, Benin Ambassador Dr. Boubacar Issa Abdourahmane, OIF Representative to AU and UNECA</p> <p>Discussions</p>
12:00–13:30	Panel Session 2	<p>The Issue of Socio-Economic and Cultural Rights in African Democratization Process since Three Decades</p> <p>Moderator: H.E. Dr. Jose Brito, President of the West Africa Institute</p> <p>Keynote Speaker S.E. Dr. Oby Ezekwesili, Former Minister, Nigeria, Democracy Ambassador, International IDEA</p> <p>Discussants Prof. Claudine Tshimanga Mbuyi Kaseka, Coordinator of the Economic Policy and Human Development Observatory, DRC Prof. Christine Desouches, University of Abomey-Calavi, Benin Prof. Jean Louis Esambo Kangashe, Judge at the Constitutional Court of the Democratic Republic of Congo Mr. Tamsir Sall, Senegal</p> <p>Discussions</p>
13:30–14:30	Lunch	

<p>14:30– 16:00</p>	<p>Panel Session 3</p>	<p>Access to Public Services and Public Service Delivery in African Countries over the past Three Decades</p> <p>Moderator: Mr. Cyrille Zogo Ondo, Programme Specialist, OIF</p> <p>Keynote Speaker Prof. Anastase Shyaka, Director General, Rwanda Governance Board</p> <p>Discussants H.E. Dr. Cristina Fontes Lima, Former Deputy Prime Minister, Cabo Verde Prof. Abdoulaye Soma, Special Advisor to the Transitional Prime Minister, Burkina Faso Mr. Jean Pierre Elong Mbassi, Secretary General, UCGLA Dr. Mamadou Dia, Former Head of Division, Democracy, Governance and Human Rights, Department of Political affairs, African Union Commission</p> <p>Discussions</p>
<p>16:00– 16:15</p>	<p>Coffee/Tea Break</p>	
<p>16:15– 17:45</p>	<p>Panel Session 4</p>	<p>Inclusion, Management of Diversity and Equity in African Countries since Three Decades</p> <p>Moderator: Prof. Daniele Darlan, University of Bangui, President of the Constitutional Court, CAR</p> <p>Keynote Speaker Prof. Abdoulaye Bathily, Former Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General</p> <p>Discussants H.E. Mrs. Euphrasie Kouassi Yao, Former Minister, Senior Advisor to the President of the Republic of Côte d'Ivoire Mrs. Rumbidzai Kandawasvika-Nhundu, Senior Programme Manager, International IDEA Prof. Ibrahim Jibrin, CDD, Nigeria</p> <p>Discussions</p>
<p>19:30– 21:30</p>	<p>Conference Dinner</p>	<p>Testimony: H.E. President Amos Sawyer, Former President of Liberia</p>



Saturday 11 November 2017

9:00– 10:30	Panel Session 5	<p>State Capacities, Public Policies and Democratic Dividends in African Countries since Three Decades</p> <p>Moderator: Dr. Aderemi Ajibewa, Director of Political Affairs, ECOWAS Commission</p> <p>Keynote Speaker Prof. Olu Ajakaye, Executive Director, African Centre for Shared Development Capacity Building (ACSDCB)</p> <p>Discussants H.E. Mrs Hadiza Alfari, Senior Advisor to the Prime Minister, Niger H.E. Hon. Anicet George Dologuele, Former Prime Minister, MP, Central African Republic Dr. Coffi Remy Noumon, Senior Advisor to the Executive Secretary of ACBF</p> <p>Discussions</p>
10:30– 10:45	Coffee/Tea Break	
10:45– 12:30	Panel Session 6	<p>Democratic Dividends in Fragile and Vulnerable Environments</p> <p>Moderator: Dr. Khabele Matlosa, Director of Political Affairs, African Union Commission</p> <p>Keynote Speaker Prof. Agosthino Zacarias, Director of Studies, Accord</p> <p>Discussants Ambassador Alfred Dube, Director of Addis-Ababa Office, Institute for Security Studies Mrs. Kalliopi Ango Ela, Director, Foundation for Geopolitics in Central Africa Dr. Moumouni Soumano, Executive Director, Centre Malien pour le Dialogue Interpartis et la Démocratie</p> <p>Discussions</p>
12:30– 14:00	Lunch	
14:00– 15:30	Side Event	<p>Conversation with AU Organs on 10 years of International IDEA/AU Partnership and the Quest for Democratic Dividends for African Citizens</p> <p>Facilitator: Prof. Adebayo Olukoshi, AWA Regional Director, International IDEA</p> <p>Discussants Dr. Khabele Matlosa, Director of Political Affairs, African Union Commission Hon. Sekou Fantamadi Traore, Representative of the President of the PAP Mrs Khady Fall Tall, Vice President of the ECOSOCC Dr Koffi Adorgloh, Regional Coordinator, Secretariat of the APRM</p> <p>Discussions</p>
15:30– 15:45	Coffee/Tea Break	

<p>15:45– 17:15</p>	<p>Panel Session 7</p>	<p>The Role of Private Sector in the Creation of a Democracy That Delivers for African Citizens since Three Decades</p> <p>Moderator: Dr. Coffi Remy Noumon, Senior Advisor to the Executive Secretary of ACBF</p> <p>Keynote Speaker M. Mohamed H'Midouche, President of IACG, Morocco, Executive Vice President of the African Diplomatic Academy, Former Director of Africa Governance Institute (AGI)</p> <p>Discussants</p> <p>Dr. Francois Ekoko, United Nations Representative for South-South Cooperation Mr. Brian Dzansi, Imani Ghana Prof. Alban Alphone Ahoure, Senior Lecturer in Economic Science, Felix Houphouët Boigny University, Abidjan, Cote d'Ivoire Mr. Dionisio Pereira, President of REPAOC</p> <p>Discussions</p>
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Sunday 12 November 2017

<p>11:00– 14:00</p>	<p>Side Event 2</p>	<p>IDEAthon and Launch of <i>The Global State of Democracy</i></p> <p>Opening Remarks Prof. Adebayo Olukoshi, AWA Regional Director, International IDEA</p> <p>Presentation of the publication Film screening and IDEAthon information</p> <p>Lab 1: 'The changing nature of Political Parties and Representation'</p> <p>Moderator: Mrs Celestine Zanou, Former Candidate to the Presidential Election, Benin</p> <p><i>Discussants</i> Mrs Raheemat Momodu, Head of the ECOWAS Liaison Office to the African Union Barrister Guy Herve Kam, Spokesperson of 'Le Balai Citoyen', Burkina Faso Dr. Mathias Hounkpe, Governance Manager, OSIWA</p> <p>Lab 2: 'Can democracy counter inequality?'</p> <p>Moderator: Prof. Topanou Victor, Former Minister, Benin</p> <p><i>Discussants</i> Mrs Souad Aden-Osman, Acting Executive Director, Coalition for Dialogue on Africa Mr. Cyrille Zogo Ondo, Program Specialist, OIF Mr. Shamsudeen Yusuf, Program Manager, CDD, Nigeria</p>
<p>14:00– 15:30</p>	<p>Lunch</p>	
<p>15:30– 16:30</p>	<p>Closing Ceremony</p>	<p>Chair H.E. Prof. Theodore Holo, President of the Constitutional Court</p> <p>Concluding Remarks Prof. Frederic Joel Aivo, Dean of the Faculty of Law and Political Science, University of Abomey Calavi, President of the ABDC, Benin Dr. Aderemi Ajibewa, Director of Political Affairs, ECOWAS Commission Dr. Khabele Matlosa, Director of Political Affairs, African Union Commission Prof. Adebayo Olukoshi, AWA Regional Director, International IDEA H.E. Emmanuel Tiando, President of the CENA</p> <p>Official Closing Statement H.E. Prof. Theodore Holo, President of the Constitutional Court</p>

About International IDEA



The International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (International IDEA) is an intergovernmental organization with the mission to advance democracy worldwide, as a universal human aspiration and enabler of sustainable development. We do this by supporting the building, strengthening and safeguarding of democratic political institutions and processes at all levels. Our vision is a world in which democratic processes, actors and institutions are inclusive and accountable and deliver sustainable development to all.

What do we do?

In our work we focus on three main impact areas: electoral processes; constitution-building processes; and political participation and representation. The themes of gender and inclusion, conflict sensitivity and sustainable development are mainstreamed across all our areas of work. We provide analyses of global and regional democratic trends; produce comparative knowledge on good international democratic practices; offer technical assistance and capacity-building on democratic reform to actors engaged in democratic processes; and convene dialogues on issues relevant to the public debate on democracy and democracy building.

Where do we work?

Our headquarters is located in Stockholm, and we have regional and country offices in Africa, the Asia-Pacific, Europe, and Latin America and the Caribbean. International IDEA is a Permanent Observer to the United Nations and is accredited to European Union institutions.

<<http://www.idea.int>>

This report summarizes the Regional Dialogue held in Cotonou, Benin, from 10 to 12 November 2017 on the theme: ‘Three decades of democratic transition in Africa: What are the dividends for citizens?’.

The event was organized by the International IDEA Africa and West Asia Programme in partnership with the Beninese Association of Constitutional Law and the International Organisation of La Francophonie, with the support of the Royal Norwegian Embassy in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

The Dialogue, the first of its kind in Africa, brought together representatives of the African Union, Regional Economic Communities, African networks of election management bodies and African constitutional courts, as well as scholars, experts and members of civil society organizations, who focused their attention on the progress gains and limits of 30 years of democratic construction in Africa.